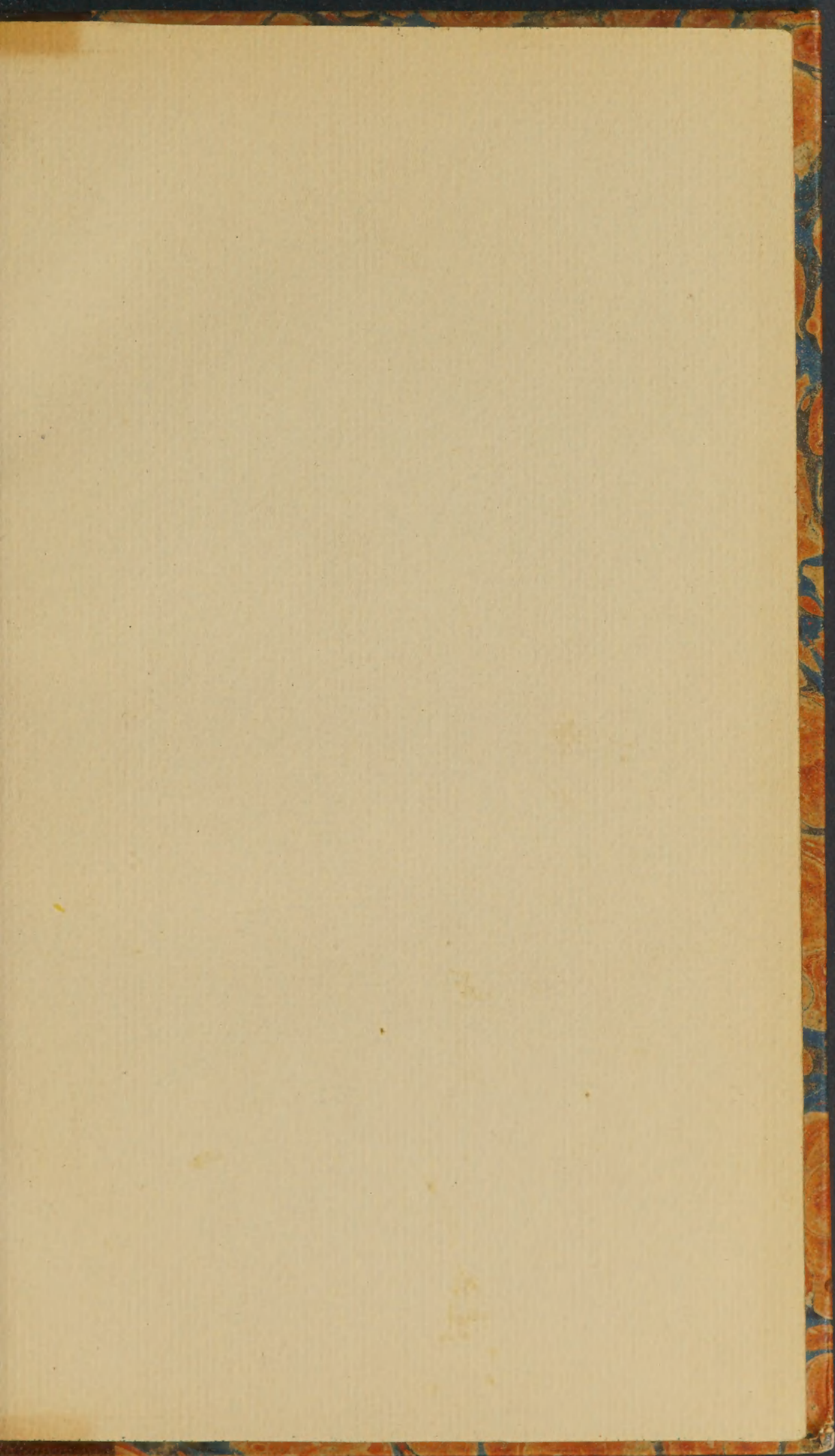


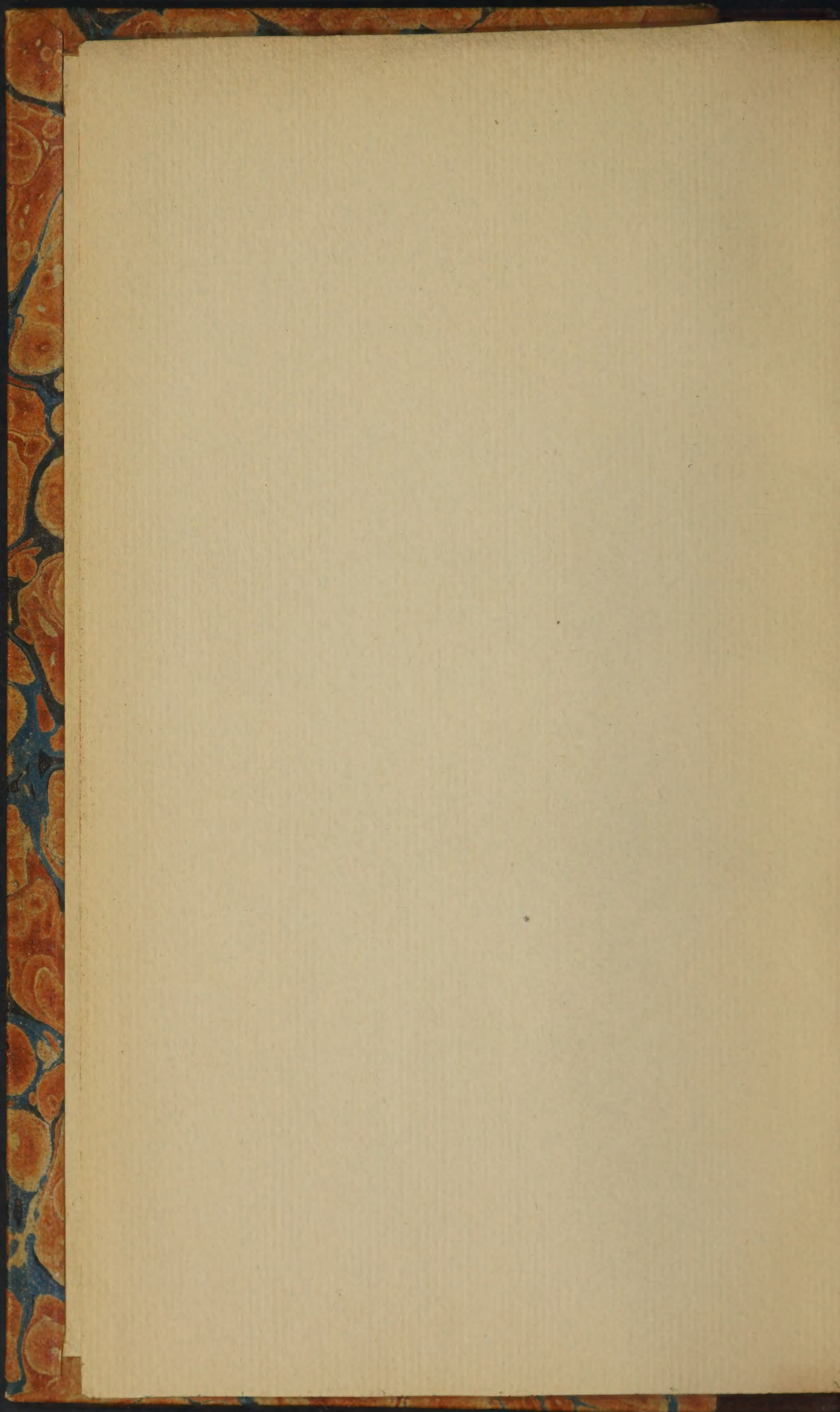


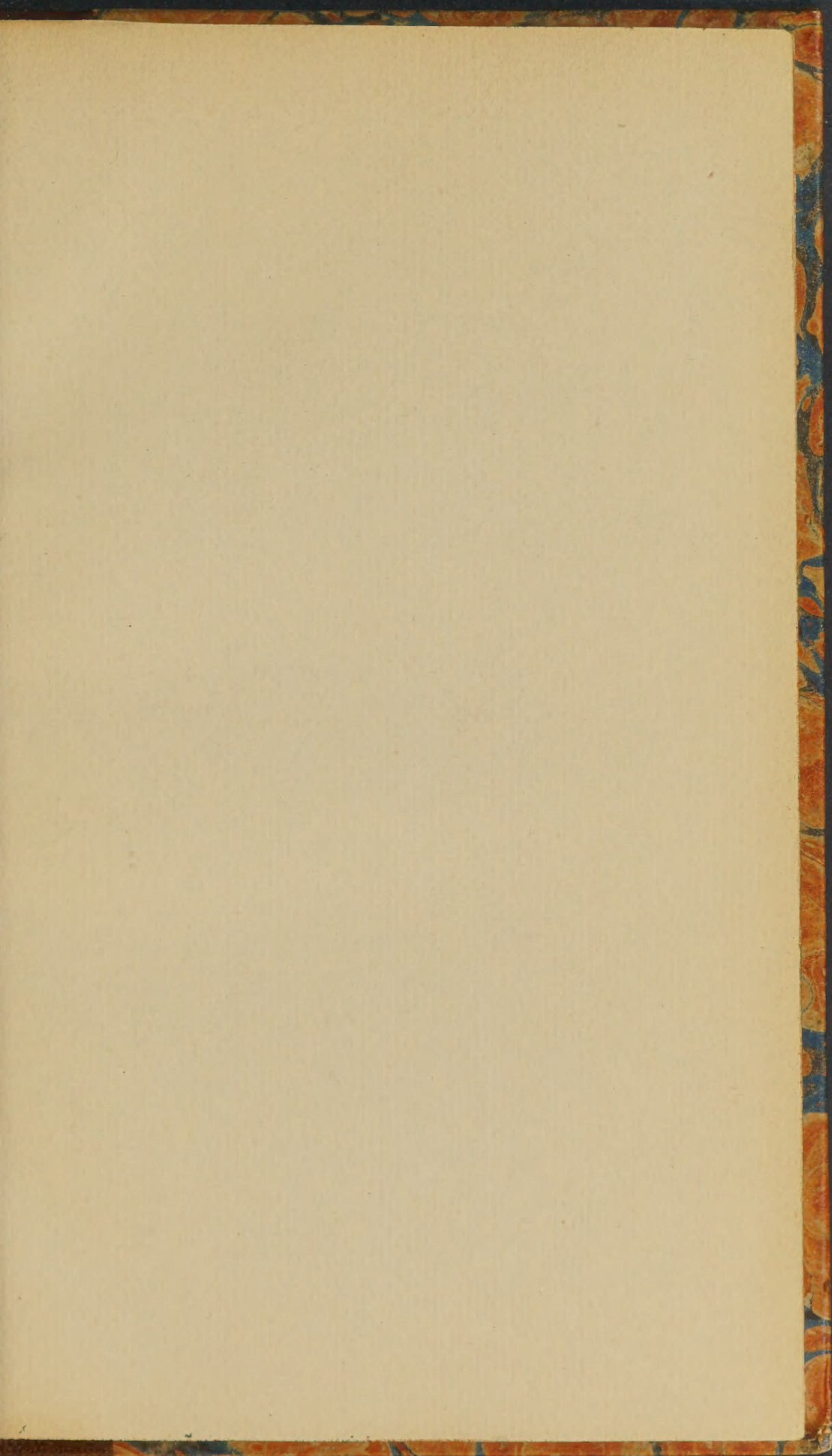


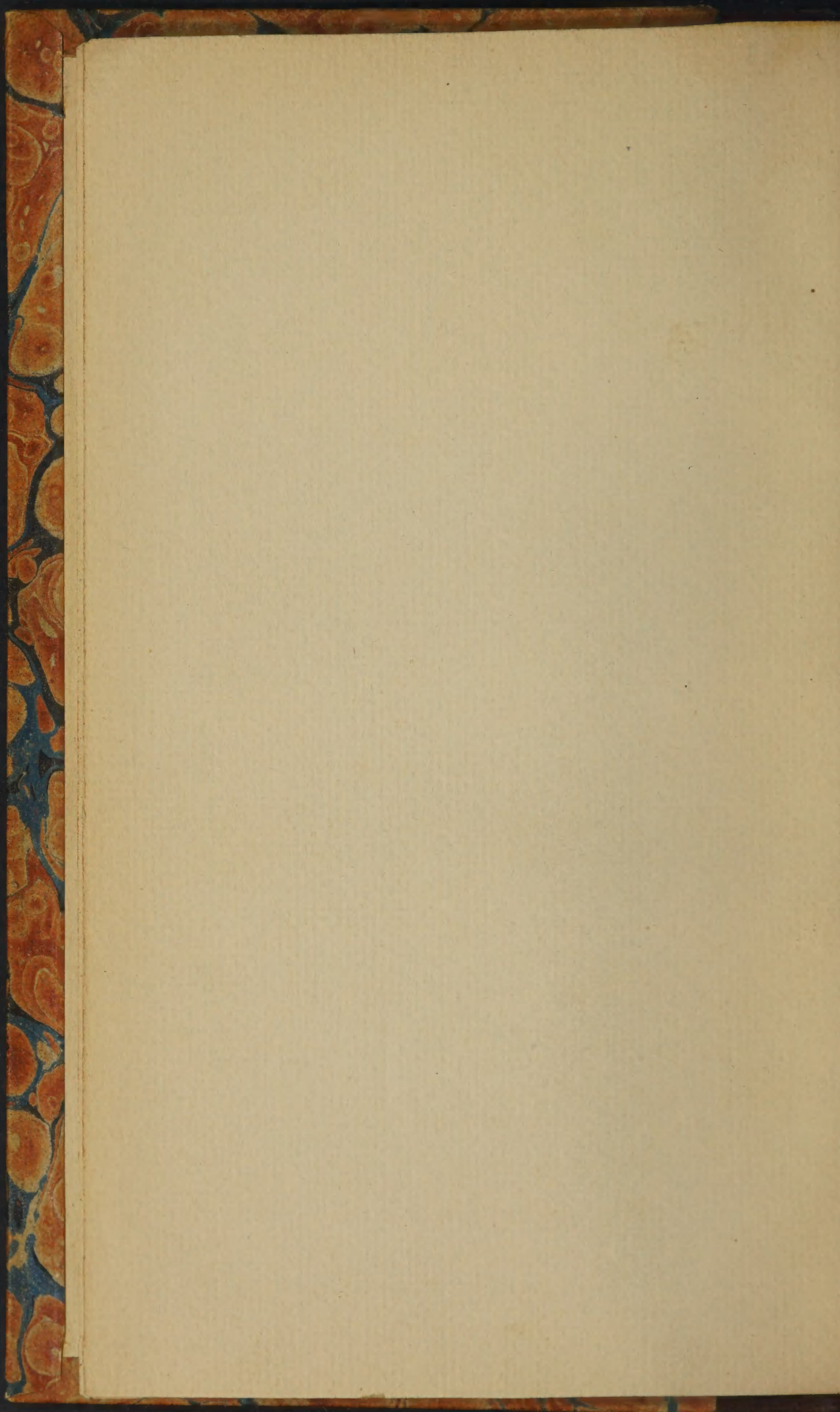


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AN

ESSAY

TOWARDS AN

EXPOSITION OF THE FUTILITY

OF

THOMAS PAINE'S OBJECTIONS

TO THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

BEING

A REPLY

TO A LATE PAMPHLET WRITTEN BY HIM, ENTITLED
" EXAMINATION OF THE PASSAGES IN THE NEW
TESTAMENT, QUOTED FROM THE OLD, AND
CALLED PROPHECIES CONCERNING
JESUS CHRIST ;" &c. &c.

BY JOHN B. COLVIN.

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1807.



AN
ESSAY

TOWARDS AN EXPOSITION OF THE FUTILITY
OF THOMAS PAINE'S OBJECTIONS TO
THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,
&c. &c.

IT cannot be necessary for me to inform the reader that Thomas Paine has written against the Christian Religion; but it may not be improper to state that he has *lately* done so. The enemy of a benevolent Religion himself, like zealots of another kind he labors in his vocation, to propagate his doctrines and swell the number of his converts. The press is his pulpit; and were there Temples in the country devoted to his mode of worship, he would doubtless turn preacher too.

In his preface Mr. Paine discloses his object: He intends to destroy the validity of the New, by shewing that the prophecies of the Old Testament, have no relation to Jesus Christ. "And if (says he) there are no such things as prophecies of any such person in the Old Testament, the New Testament is a forgery of the Councils of Nice and Laodicea, and the faith founded thereon delusion and falsehood."

On the votes of the councils of Nice and Laodicea, Thomas Paine has more than once laid great stress—"The books (he says) that now compose the New Testament, were then voted for by *yeas* and *nays*, as we now vote a law."

This assertion embraces both a falsehood and a quibble, and dishonors the man who professes to be the champion of Truth. Only *seven* of the twenty-seven parts of the New Testament were put to trial, namely; the Epistles, to the Hebrews, of James, second of Peter, second of John, third of John, of Jude, and the Revelation. Whether these should be admitted into the canon was matter of doubt, and hence it became necessary for the councils to decide upon their credibility, not as we “now vote a law,” but as we *try a cause* in a court of justice, *by the evidence of FACTS*, which those parts of the New Testament afforded themselves, or such as could be gathered from other sources. The members of the councils were not legislators framing a code of faith, but Jurors or Triers of the truth of parts of a book of doctrines already in existence: And it appears, agreeably to Mr. Paine’s admission, that “A great many [of the books] that were offered had a majority of nays, and were rejected;” that is, there was not sufficient proof to entitle them to credit, and they were pronounced apocryphal. The remaining twenty parts had been received by Christians at the very earliest æra of their introduction, and at all times afterwards, as canonical. Thus, in the first place, it is *untrue* that “*The books* that now “compose the New Testament, were then voted for,” because only seven out of the twenty-seven were put to trial; and it is a quibble to say they were “voted for as we now *vote a law*,” because they were tried with regard to their *validity*, and not voted into existence by the councils like we vote a law, from an opinion of their *expediency*.

The conclusion drawn by Mr. Paine, that the New Testament is a forgery of the councils of Nice and Laodicea if unsupported by the prophecies of the Old, is by no means a sound one : First, because the councils had nothing to do with the greater part of them in their capacity of triers : And, secondly ; if the councils had voted *all* the books true, even without any evidence to support such a verdict, they might nevertheless be true ; or even if false, have been the forgeries of other persons.

But admitting the books of the New Testament to be a forgery, it is a false conclusion to say, " The faith founded thereon is delusion and falsehood : " Because the " faith " of a christian rests not so much on the genuineness of the books which contain his creed, as upon the correctness of the doctrines which they teach. To turn a point of Mr. Paine's against himself, I will say, if the councils of Nice and Laodicea had fabricated the book called Euclid's Elements, and had afterwards voted it to be received as true and divine, that circumstance would not have altered the nature of the propositions which are laid down as Euclid's. Neither does the imputation of forgeries, with which Mr. Paine charges the new Testament, alter the nature of the doctrines which it contains ; and if those doctrines, when submitted to the examination and test of human reason, appear correct, the faith which is founded upon them can neither be false nor deluding.

It is at all times necessary to distinguish between *faith* and *opinion*. When we have examined a thing, and have ascertained its proper-

ties, qualities, and so forth ; and have fixed in our minds, a correct idea of it according to the lights of our reason, we then *believe* it to be that thing which previous examination has taught us it is ; and as far as we *believe*, we have *faith*.—*Opinion* does not go so far : It is a thought, subject to alteration, which varies with circumstances, and which is the forerunner of faith. Faith begins where opinion ends ; and when once a thing becomes an article of faith, it ceases to be matter of opinion.

Hence the absurdity of the following argument of Thomas Paine's—

“ One set of preachers make salvation to consist in *believing*. They tell their congregations “ that if they believe in Christ their sins shall be “ forgiven. This, in the first place, is an encouragement to sin, in a similar manner, as when a “ prodigal young fellow is told his father will pay “ all his debts, he runs into debt the faster and becomes the more extravagant ; Daddy, says he, “ pays all, and on he goes. Just so in the other “ case, *Christ pays all*, and on goes the sinner.”

This is wit from the kennel ; the scum and filth, and rubbish of language ; which decent men avoid—not, indeed, because it *is* wit ; but because it is *foul* wit, unsuited to a grave subject or for a respectable company : yet I have quoted it, to shew that a witty man is not always a judicious one ; and that a man may sacrifice his judgment to his wit.

“ Believing in Christ is encouragement to sin.” This is the amount of Mr. Paine's argument. *Belief* is *faith*. To believe in Christ, in the christian sense of the phrase, is to be convinced,

by the operation of our reason, that the doctrines which Christ taught are correct ; for Jesus Christ, divested of the doctrines which he inculcated, would be no object for regard or veneration. Therefore to *believe in Christ*, is to believe his doctrines ;* and if those doctrines embrace (as I intend to shew) every principle which can make men good here, and happy hereafter, both in religion and morals, it is certainly a rational doctrine to preach up, that whosoever believes in Jesus Christ shall be saved.

But as it may be contended, that some who believe, do not act up to their belief, I proceed to shew that such is not the fact ; and that every man who *sincerely believes*, squares his conduct to his faith. I must be understood as speaking exclusively of happiness and misery.

I deem it an incontrovertible proposition, that a human being, of two possible situations that are offered to him, will always choose that in preference which he believes will give him the greatest degree of pleasure and enjoyment ; and that he will ENDEAVOR *to attain* what is *pleasant*, and

* To shew that this argument is strictly in unison with the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, as preached by the Ministers of the Gospel, I here lay down the interpretation of the doctrine agreeably to the principles of the Methodists as established by Mr. Wesley :—To wit : “ The true Christian *faith* is. not only to believe the Holy Scriptures and articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ, *whereof doth follow* A LOVING HEART TO OBEY HIS COMMANDMENTS. And this faith neither any devil hath, *nor any wicked man*. No ungodly man hath or can have this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven, and be reconciled to the favor of God.”

Principles of the Methodists.

strive to avoid what is *disagreeable*. If there were any doubt of this, the whole life of every man might be adduced to support it : For even in childhood, before reason assumes her sway, he *solicits the sweet and rejects the bitter* ; he *avoids* what is *painful* and *courts* what is *pleasurable* : And from infancy to the grave, his conduct is a continual struggle for happiness, or an agreeable state of existence ; and his efforts are invariably directed to avoid its opposite. Indeed, so keen is the desire for happiness, that most of the crimes and evils of life are the effects of our eagerness and anxiety to attain it : And thus vice appears to be nothing more than a wrong direction of our faculties for the purpose of procuring what is agreeable to our natures. But I think there is no man who would not prefer the virtuous and honorable road to happiness in this world to the wicked and abandoned path ; and it is generally from despair of not succeeding in the former way that they pursue the latter.

The doctrines of Jesus Christ, however, hold out the *certainty* of happiness hereafter to *all* who sincerely seek it ; and if a man *believes in them* (and believing in them is believing in Christ—Christ being nothing if divested of the religion he taught) that man *must*, agreeably to *his nature*, which continually *impels him to seek happiness and avoid evil*, labor with all his might to do those things which are required of him in order to insure his felicity hereafter.

He that *believes*, therefore, in Jesus Christ, acts up to his belief ; and acting up to it, agreeably to the dictates of the Christian Religion, which are sanctioned by human reason, will be

saved—or what is the same thing, rewarded hereafter by the Deity. None but hypocrites play truant to their religion and their God.

Consequently, forgiveness of sins, by believing in Jesus Christ, is no encouragement to sinners. You may with as much propriety say that treating a reformed man in society with respect is encouraging him to persevere in evil. The relinquishment of our vices and evil habits recommends us to the good and virtuous members of the community in which we live: They overlook our past faults and encourage us to persevere in our reformation. What does the doctrine of forgiveness of sins through belief in Jesus Christ teach more?

But it is not true that “a prodigal young fellow runs into debt the faster and becomes more extravagant when told his father will pay all his debts.” A *prodigal* young fellow will run into debt just as fast without his father’s paying his debts as if he had that assurance, for *a prodigal never calculates cost*. The only difficulty is in finding people to trust him. On the *Creditor*, perhaps, the circumstance of the father’s paying the prodigal’s debts might have some influence; and it would be more proper had Mr. Paine put the following expression in the mouth of his spendthrift than the one he did—“Folks credit and countenance me,” says he, “and on he goes”—without minding the warnings and admonitions of honest people who attempt to reform him. Just so the sinner may exclaim of Thomas Paine—“Father Tom says there is no hell nor devil—He justifies all—so dash on my boys.”

I am no sectarian myself, and therefore I shall not pretend to vindicate nor to condemn the doctrine concerning the elect: But I will quote Mr. Paine's sneer upon that head, and expose another fallacy of his:—He says---

“ Another set of preachers tell their congregations that God predestinated and selected from all eternity, a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned eternally. If this were true, *the day of judgment* IS PAST, *their preaching* is in vain, and they had better work at some useful calling for their livelihood.

“ This doctrine also like the former hath a direct tendency to demoralize mankind. Can a bad man be reformed by telling him, that if he is one of those who was decreed to be saved, he will be saved whether he believes it or not, for this is the result of the doctrine. Such preaching and such preachers do injury to the moral world. They had better be at the plough.”

Allowing that a certain number have been predestinated for salvation or damnation, I think it will be difficult for any man to shew that the day of judgment is past. A certain *number* are not certain *individuals*---and Thomas who was born in the year five hundred, may be damned, whilst John who was born in the year one thousand, may be saved. Thus, *the door is always open*: And after all, if those who are *saved* are the *good*, and those who are *damned* are the *bad*, in what does it differ from the notion which Thomas Paine himself, in a qualified way, entertains---that the good will hereafter be reward-

ed and the wicked punished? Therefore such "preaching is not in vain;" for as no man certainly knows who is to be damned or who is to be saved,* every man may suppose himself a favorite with the Almighty, and act more uprightly from a pious and grateful motive. Make a man a king, he instantly puts on the habiliments of royalty, and endeavors to maintain regal dignity; and persuade a man that he is one of the elect---a chosen saint---and he will strive to preserve the character. This alone, does much good in the world; and (provided there are hands enough at the plough and other useful callings) I can see no harm in making men better by preaching up predestination and selection.

But it would seem, indeed, that Thomas Paine is not satisfied that a *Christian* should be saved at all. If forgiveness of sins be preached up, that, with him, is an encouragement to sin: If eternal damnation be denounced against sinners, then "the day of judgment is past (quoth Thomas) and preaching is in vain." Take him which way you will, he is out of humor with the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and hates all its ministers; for no better reason, it would seem, than that which Shylock gave for his resentment---"*Because they ARE Christians.*" He would, in reality, have them all "work at some useful calling for their livelihood," or "be at the

* This argument is strictly conformable to the doctrine of Calvin, for "He believed that God had fixed an eternal purpose to save some part of the human race, and to reject others; but as *that was a secret which no human being could know*, consequently it was the duty of ministers to exhort all the people alike."

plough." And yet there is not a greater preacher than Thomas Paine; and he has made as good a living by his preaching as the most cunning priest of the day. - Why *he* has never been at the plough, or worked at some useful calling, the world is left to conjecture.*

Having examined the "Preface," I advance to the "Introductory Chapter," which relates to dreams, and which Thomas Paine calls an "Essay on Dream." Under this head he endeavors to shew that dreaming is an operation of the imagination whilst the judgment is asleep. Instead of denominating it an "Essay on Dream," he ought to have been more modest, and have said, an "Essay on [MY OWN] Dreams :". Because, as a revelation to one man is not a revelation to another man, so neither is the dream of one man like unto the dream of another man. Dreams have not a *general*, but a *particular* nature; and they vary in each person according to age, to the ideas they have acquired, to the texture of nerve, and healthiness of body. I have no objection to Mr. Paine's dreaming, but he certainly shall not dream for me. I differ from him in his explication of dreams. I contend that dreams are, essentially, operations of human reason, in which the several faculties of

* Since I wrote the preceding remark, I have seen in a newspaper called the "Public Advertiser," printed and published in the city of New-York, the copy of a letter from Mr. Paine to the late Henry Laurens, of South-Carolina, one of the presidents of the old Congress. In that letter the writer says, "I [Thomas Paine] am a FARMER of THOUGHTS."—This, though a false metaphor, is an *ingenious conceit*; and is certainly equal to the most cunning sophism that Shakespeare ever palmed on old Jack Falstaff.

memory, judgment and imagination, have their proportionate agency, according to the vigor or weakness of the mind of the dreamer when awake. I contend that no image can be formed in the mind without the aid of the memory, and no distinction of images can exist without the operation of the judgment.

Ideas, it is allowed, are only gained by sensation and reflection. I hold with Locke, that "The dreams of sleeping men are all made up of the waking man's ideas;" and I go further, I contend that dreaming may add to the stock of useful ideas already in the mind. Was any person ever known to see a vision in his sleep, the materials whereof were not before in his thoughts, or had existed in his desires, his hopes, or his fears? If a Christian dreams of Heaven, it is a Heaven agreeably to the idea of it which he has been taught according to the Christian system. It is not, therefore, the play of the imagination alone which sets men to dreaming, because the imagination cannot produce an image, the parts whereof were not before in the mind; it is rather a compiler of images than a creator of them, and its principal occupation is to give *coloring* to those which already exist. The imagination gives a brighter or a gloomier hue to every idea; but it is the judgment alone which can distinguish between ideas, and the memory that must preserve them. Without the agency of the memory, no consciousness of dreams could exist; and without the operation of the judgment there could be no such thing as dreaming at all, any more than

there could be such things as thinking or arguing without judgment.

It is therefore incorrect for Mr. Paine to say, "Now in proportion as these several faculties sleep, slumber, or keep awake, during the continuance of a dream, in that proportion will the dream be reasonable or frantic, remembered or forgotten:" For it is the *health* or *disease* of the *body*, which occasions a dream to be "reasonable or frantic." A sound, healthy body, does not often dream, but a weakly or sickly body almost always dreams. The senses are not so readily composed to rest in the latter as the former. Consequently dreaming is produced by the particular state of the body, and not by the disposition of the mental faculties.

To speak of the judgment's going to sleep is rank nonsense. It is the brain which sleeps, and imagination, judgment, and memory, are all in the brain: They, therefore, all sleep together, or all wake together. There are different degrees of sleep, from being wide awake to the most perfect state of rest; but whether a man is sleeping or waking, imagination, judgment and memory are nothing more than *instruments* by which the brain works; yet they are instruments which must be used all together. To suppose that judgment or memory, or both, may sleep whilst the imagination is awake, is to presume that these faculties have their separate and distinct apartments in the human brain, and would lead to the ridiculous conclusion that one part of the human head slept whilst the other was

awake; a supposition much more absurd than the fable of Argus with his hundred eyes.

Mr. Paine might as well say of a carpenter that his chisel sleeps, as of a man that his judgment sleeps: It may do very well for metaphor, but not for truth. When a carpenter ceases to work with it, his chisel is inactive; when the brain is asleep, the judgment is at rest. Now the brain is not "fully asleep" when a man dreams—because a thing cannot be active and passive at one and the same time. When the brain is at rest, how can it exercise its faculties? When the carpenter's hands are withdrawn, how can the chisel move?

Of the same kind of logic is the following paragraph:

"If the memory sleeps we shall have no other knowledge of the dream than that we have dreamt, without knowing what it was about.—In this case it is sensation rather than recollection that acts. The dream has given us some sense of past trouble, and we feel it as a hurt, rather than remember it as a vision."

Now, "if the memory sleeps," how does a man come by the knowledge that he has dreamt? When the memory is dormant, every thing passes by it without making an impression. It is the memory alone which can furnish the knowledge of a past fact: Hence if memory be asleep, how shall I know that I have dreamt? Why, according to Mr. Paine, "The dream has given us some sense of pain or trouble, and we feel it as a hurt rather than remember it as a vision." But I deny altogether that a man retains any "sense of past pain or trouble" in the ab-

sence of the memory, and I need produce no other proof of it than this, that no man who has experienced pain or trouble is conscious of it at *all* times ; he only remembers it as recollection calls it forth from his memory. *We can know a thing by sensation only whilst we feel it.* Pinch a man at night whilst asleep, but not sufficiently severe to rouse him from his slumbers ; and he gets up in the morning and is ignorant of the circumstance, the brain being so composed that no impression was made on it. The brain cannot be at work without being sensible of it in some way ; and when we do not recollect a dream by aid of memory the case is plain that we know nothing about the matter, and have in fact not dreamed at all.

But how extraordinary are all Mr. Paine's arguments on this head ! He says—

“ If memory only slumbers we shall have a
 “ faint remembrance of the dream, and after a
 “ few moments it will sometimes happen that the
 “ principal passages of the dream will occur to
 “ us more fully. The cause of this is that the
 “ memory will sometimes continue slumbering
 “ or sleeping after we are awake ourselves, and
 “ that so fully, that it may and sometimes does
 “ happen, that we do not immediately recollect
 “ where we are, nor what we have been about,
 “ or have to do. But when the memory starts
 “ into wakefulness it brings the knowledge of
 “ these things back upon us, like a flood of light,
 “ and sometimes the dream with it.”

I take this to be a full admission of my proposition. “ When the memory only slumbers (says Mr. Paine) we shall have a *faint* remem-

brance," &c. By the same rule, when our memory is *entirely asleep* we have *no* remembrance of a dream at all—for then, in fact, we cannot dream. The reason why we sometimes "after a few minutes," recollect "the principal passages of a dream more fully," is not because "the memory will sometimes continue *slumbering* or *SLEEPING AFTER WE ARE AWAKE*," (for that I hold to be a palpable contradiction,) but from the inertness of the operations of the mind which we frequently experience when wide awake, until a leading idea discloses a whole train, when they rush on like a company of grenadiers to the storming of a redoubt. For example, a man wishes to recollect some certain ideas which he had contemplated at a previous period: At first he has "a faint remembrance" of them only; when, all of a sudden, the whole are presented to his view. Now, is not the operation of the mind in both these cases alike? And what does it prove, but that the brain is more vigorous at one time than it is at another in the exercise of its faculties? And that one idea giving a jog to the memory, (all the ideas desired being there) it performs its duty?

Dreaming then, is the same as thinking, with this difference, that dreaming is an operation of the brain in a state approaching to sleep.

Nor is there any just cause for Mr. Paine to say, as he does:

"As this is the state of the mind in dreaming, it may rationally be said every person is mad once in twenty-four hours, for were he to act in the day as he dreams in the night, he would be confined as a lunatic."

Because, dreaming is thinking ; and men frequently think as extravagantly in the day time as they dream in the night, yet they are not reputed mad. The error lies in this ; Mr. Paine draws a comparison between dreaming at night and acting in the day, whereas the true parallel is between dreaming and thinking ; for in the same way that a man may think wildly without acting, so may he dream wildly without acting.

I come now to speak of insanity, which Mr. Paine avers to be " a disunion of the faculties of the brain and a cessation of the judgment during wakefulness." This definition is not supported by experience. Insanity is produced by want of energy in the brain, or what may properly be termed nervous debility in that part ; and, instead of being " a *disunion* of the faculties," is, in truth, a *confusion* and heterogeneous association of the whole, occasioned by a want of firmness in the brain to perform its functions. And idiocy is simply nothing more than deficiency of capacity in the brain to receive ideas, to retain them, and to reflect on them. The comparison which Mr. Paine draws between dreaming, and insanity and idiocy, does not therefore bear the test ; because the former is the natural and healthy operation of the brain accordingly as it approaches to or recedes from a state of complete rest : whilst the latter are absolutely diseases of the brain, which go to the annihilation of the imagination, memory, and judgment altogether.

It may appear to be trifling with my subject too much to attend to the investigation of such minute circumstances as these, which, however,

make a conspicuous figure in Mr. Paine's pamphlet : But a moment's reflection will evince their importance : He contends that the Christian Religion is founded upon dreams ; and, if he can shew that dreams are the effects of a disunion of the faculties of the brain, and similar to the incoherent notions of a madman, he draws the very natural deduction that they deserve no attention whatever.

But I think I have shewn, and I appeal to the experience of all dreamers for the truth of my proposition, that dreams are essential operations of human reason.

I shall now take the liberty of making a few remarks upon the nature of the human mind, and they will be found not impertinent to my subject.

What is called the *mind*, is in truth nothing more than the *brain* : And when we say a thing is *in the mind*, we mean really nothing else than that it is *fixed on the brain*. The brain or mind is matter ; because, as Mr. Paine truly observes, if it be injured " by a fracture of the scull or by long and habitual intemperance, a wise man may be changed into an idiot ; A BEING WITHOUT A MIND." It may be objected to this, that in idiots and some others, the brain may exist, and yet there be no mind ; but this would be a sophism, because a brain, to be really such, must have all its parts and powers. A broken violin, is not a violin in fact, because it will not produce harmony. If, however, it will produce harmony, whether in a greater or less degree than other violins matters not, it is then a violin. And so with the brain, where it has not been

injured and when it is complete as to its faculties, whether it be stronger or weaker, it is a complete brain. We have ways of distinguishing the degrees of strength of brain ; we say one man has a *strong* mind, another a *middling* mind, and the third a *weak* mind. All these expressions have relation to the state of the brain ; and if the brain be injured, the mind is imperfect. When the fiddle-strings are broken or worn out, we can have no good music.

But although *mind* be *matter*, yet *ideas* are not matter. Ideas which have been generated in a brain before it has been fractured, and have been intelligibly written or printed, are not destroyed by the fracture : And yet those ideas are not in the paper on which they are written, nor in the type with which they are printed ; but exist in their own real essence, and can be imbibed and circulated without injury to the medium through which they manifest themselves.

Now this being the case, it may not be improper to enquire something concerning the acquirement of ideas. We have organs which convey to the mind or brain ideas of all visible and sensible things ; but there are other ideas, which we gain by *reflection*. Yet how that reflection is produced, is a circumstance which baffles all investigation. I might explain it by saying it is an operation of the mind ; but that would be vague and unsatisfactory. *Reflection*, in my own opinion, is that power of the brain or mind which partakes of the nature of the Deity : It is the faculty that leads us to wisdom ; which enables us to reason, to draw conclusions, to anticipate the events of futurity, and to manage all

our concerns to the best advantage. Without *reflection*, the ideas which we gain by sensation would lie torpid and useless. *Reflection* may, therefore, be that method which God has caused to exist of communicating himself to man ; of revealing knowledge to him for his greater perfection.

It is in solitude and in silence that *reflection* is most active. In bed, when the brain is undisturbed by the noise of surrounding objects and disengaged from the consideration of a thousand subjects which the senses present to it when we are abroad and employed in the busy scenes of life, *reflection* acts with redoubled vigor. It is in these calm moments that *reflection* produces on the brain the most luminous ideas. When writers are engaged in the composition of any important work, they withdraw to privacy and silence. Divines choose retirement for the advantage of *reflection* ; and so does every other person who wishes to enjoy the full benefit of his own reason on any subject in which he is engaged. Why, then, should we doubt, seeing the case is so common, that whilst in their beds, in the silent contemplations of the night, before the brain has been steeped entirely in sleep, men have gained ideas which have led to the happiest results ; and which, from the manner they were produced, and above all, from the high wisdom which they manifest, may with much propriety be termed *inspiration* or a *revelation* from God ? It was thus that a dream revealed to the world the best knowledge of the Deity : For instance—

“ And behold, the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”...*Mat. ch. 1, v.20.*

Now it was Joseph's dream that occasioned Christ first to be known in his sacred character. Joseph's dreams which produced the idea of the divinity of Jesus, which saved him from death in his infancy, so that he was preserved to the end that he might communicate to mankind those illuminating doctrines denominated the Christian Religion.

Whether this knowledge came to us by a *dreaming* or *waking* thought, is of no importance: And because the first idea on which it is founded originated in a dream, we are not to call it as Mr. Paine does, “*a religion of dreams,*” any more than we should call Sir Isaac Newton's principles of gravity, principles of *apples*, because the idea which first produced those principles was occasioned by the falling of that fruit whilst he was sitting under an apple-tree.

It may be here objected, that Mahomet likewise dreamed, and claimed the same divine origin for his system of religion. But the prophet of Mecca was a dreamer of another kind. He dreamt for himself and for his own interest. Jesus Christ was no dreamer: Others dreamed of him, and without the hope of reward. Mahomet sought for worldly dominion, and propagated his religion by the sword. How widely different was the character of Jesus Christ! He neither sought for wealth nor renown. His doc-

trines did not flatter, but condemned the vices of mankind. He did not exact worship and reverence for himself, but for the Deity. I defy Mr. Paine, and all his disciples in Europe or America, to produce a parallel to the author of the Christian religion ; in whom so much modesty was united to such profound wisdom ; so much contentment under poverty ; patience under persecution ; and such benevolent principles in so warlike an age. A man may lie to exalt himself ; but he will rarely lie to exalt another, where there is no advantage accruing to him from it. The dreams of Joseph were not for his own advantage.

The two first verses of the 36th chapter of Ecclesiasticus seem to afford for Mr. Paine a kind of triumph. I, too, will quote them :

“ The hopes of a man void of understanding
 “ are vain and false ; and dreams lift up fools.
 “ Whoso regardeth dreams is like him that catch-
 “ eth at a shadow, and followeth after the wind.”

This passage is introduced to show that it is foolishness to pay any attention to dreams. In a general sense this is true enough : Yet although a man would be a dunce to pay attention to all the idle vagaries of the brain, either dreaming or waking ; he would be equally stupid to reject a rational idea because it came to him in a dream. But in the case of Joseph's dream concerning the divinity of Christ, there seemed to have existed a necessity for communicating the fact from the Deity to man through the medium of the brain ; and, in order that this should be effected with due solemnity, the

mind when in a state of dream was chosen to make the impression more awful.

The conception of the Virgin Mary was a miracle : And here it is necessary to define what a miracle really is. I am willing to take Boulanger's definition, which I presume will be admitted by Mr. Paine. Boulanger declares that "*A miracle is an effect contrary to the established laws of nature ;*" that is, God having established *general* laws for the government of his works, if at any time he performs a special act by the interference of his *particular* power, such interposition is a miracle. Now, if such particular act were to destroy the general law, then I would admit that a miracle is impossible, from the immutable quality of the Deity. The miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary did not interfere with the general law which ordains that man shall produce his species only by generation. It was a special act independent of the general law, and yet it conformed to the general law as much as possible. To familiarise this exposition more to the reader's mind, I will draw a parallel. The legislature of Maryland have made a general law for the benefit of insolvent debtors ; yet there are certain unfortunate persons who cannot take advantage of it from want of citizenship or the persecuting disposition of their creditors : These unfortunate persons apply to the legislature, which passes a *special* act for their relief ; and yet the special act does not violate the integrity of the general law, but co-operates with it.

To deny that God can do such a special act, is to deny his *power*; and no man I believe will be presumptuous enough to arraign that.

Now if all "effects which are contrary to the established laws of nature," are miracles, then earthquakes are miracles, and miracles too, in a greater degree than the conception of the Virgin Mary; because, as far as they go, they are subversive of those established laws; whereas the conception was no further in contradiction to the established laws than as it related to the pregnancy of the Virgin; for the birth was natural and in the common way. Yet an earthquake, being visible in its effects and palpable to our external senses, is not considered as a very strange affair, farther than it excites our terrors and apprehensions: But the conception of a woman, being a thing, which from its very nature is hidden from our view, there is no possible *human* means by which we could come to a knowledge of a miracle of that kind: Hence the *necessity* of a communication of the circumstance from the Deity; and if *Reflection* be the medium of intercourse between God and man, and man be capable of *Reflection* in dream, the difficulty is at once solved. I contend for this explanation, which is supported by my arguments in the preceding pages.

There was certainly, on a principle of natural philosophy, a necessity for a miraculous conception in the case. It is an universal and established law of Nature that every species of animals shall produce after their own kind, and not otherwise: This is generally true as relates to the

material parts and shapes of animals ; and it is particularly so with respect to their intellectual endowments : And although an unnatural connection between animals of a different kind may produce a mule ; yet it is impossible that any intermixture of different species of animals can produce a being of a higher order with respect to mental qualities than that which they are of themselves. Therefore, a man, who was the offspring of a man, could not have possessed that superior intelligence with which it is very evident Jesus Christ was imbued. The Deity wished to embody a soul of a superior kind : This could not be the work of a man, because a man cannot produce a being of an order superior to himself.

Here, then, we find in the miraculous conception of the Virgin Mary, a special act of the Deity, which *does not* violate his general law, but conforms to it in every thing except one circumstance ; and to conform to that circumstance *would have* essentially destroyed a general and established principle. And in this exercise of the power of God, I confess I see nothing which the use of my best reason can call absurd.

I proceed now to the consideration of Mr. Paine's arguments concerning the prophecies in the Old Testament which are said to relate to Jesus Christ : And with regard to that point, I lay down this proposition, which I hold to be incontestible :

A demonstration of the wrong application of a passage from any book or writing by one person to establish the character of another person, does not prove any thing *against* the character

of the person to whom it is said to apply. It only proves that the passage does not relate to him.

And after all Mr. Paine's labor in investigating the prophecies applied to Jesus Christ, he cannot possibly draw any other conclusion than this; that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, have applied certain expressions in the Old Testament to Jesus Christ, which relate to something else. This does not affect the doctrines of Jesus, nor diminish the holiness of the character that he represented.

Neither can Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, be charged as the propagators of falsehoods; because they doubtless saw, or thought they saw, a connection between the prophecies and Jesus Christ; and they applied them, just as we now apply a passage from any ancient writer, where we perceive a coincidence, or think we perceive one, with the subject on which we are treating.

But why, it may be inquired, admitting the prophecies to be wrongly applied, contend that those who thus made the improper application were *inspired*? In answer to this, I have only to observe, that the *inspiration*, or what is the same thing, the superior perception which a man may have on one subject, does not necessarily imply that he should have an equal penetration on all subjects. The Apostles, whilst they were enlightened with respect to the true knowledge of the Deity, might have been ignorant in other matters. And this may be admitted, without in the least degree impeaching the wisdom of God; for the great object of the Deity in the mission of Jesus Christ appears to have been to benefit

mankind by pointing out the means of their salvation; and if the Apostles were sufficiently illuminated to preserve and transmit that to posterity, the object of the Deity was answered, and there was no occasion for working another miracle in order to make them superior in every particular thing to their fellow men. Whilst Thomas Paine flouts one miracle, he falls out with the Deity for not having performed a greater number.

I do not mean to admit, by this train of reasoning, that the passages called prophecies are not applicable to Jesus Christ; for that point is very ably contested by men of as keen parts as Thomas Paine, and particularly in a very forcible manner by the Bishop of Landaff: But I contend, that if the passages called prophecies, are in fact not prophecies of Jesus Christ, it proves nothing *against* Jesus Christ, but merely shows that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were mistaken in supposing they had reference to him.

If, then, Mr. Paine's proofs against the prophecies furnish no other result than *that*, Jesus Christ still exists in all his brightness, and the Painites have no cause for exultation.

Let me now approach Mr. Paine in his vital part. He says—"The *word of God* is the *creation* we behold; and this word of God *revealeth* to man all that is necessary for man to know of his creator.

On this point I enter the lists cheerfully with him. His *word of God* is the *creation*; mine is the *Bible*.

Mr. Paine says---“Do we want to contemplate his (God's) power? we see it in the immensity of his creation.”

Now all that we can learn of the *power* of God from the creation, are the various *material* forms of which that creation is composed. And this “*revealeth*” nothing but rough notions of strength or ability in the author of it. But the Bible goes further, and after explaining to the understanding of man the power of the Deity in framing his creation, we are presented with a display of that infinitely superior power whereby God controls the whole of his works. In this there is all the difference imaginable. It is the same case as when we see any great machine in motion; we admire it as a machine, and conclude that the fabricator must be ingenious; but of that ingenuity we can only have a vague idea until he opens to us the secret springs of his machinery. It is then we behold the wonderful powers of the inventor, and are struck with astonishment. Contemplate the creation as long as you please, it only becomes the more puzzling. And what has been the conclusions of most of those who have been guided by that alone and have closely scrutinized it? They have frequently ended with denying a God altogether. So that Mr. Paine's word of God instead of teaching the true knowledge of the Deity, tends to create doubts as to the existence of one; whilst mine not only displays his power in all its majesty, both in spirit and in matter, but leads to a more intimate and familiar acquaintance with the potency of the Deity by describing his controlling influence over soul as well as body.

Mr. Paine proceeds---“ Do we want to contemplate his *wisdom* ? we see it in the unchangeable order by which the whole is governed.”

Here Mr. Paine has confounded the *power* of God with his *wisdom*. The order which reigns in the general system of the universe is the effect of his power alone. His wisdom can only be contemplated as to the ultimate object of the creation. Now, in the “unchangeable order” of the creation, we behold nothing but an arbitrary disposition of the parts, proceeding from a will that is absolute and all-powerful. But as to the wisdom of God, what does creation teach us ? It shews us neither the motive nor the object of the Deity for framing it. Here the Bible far excels the word of God of Thomas Paine. The Bible displays the wisdom of God as it relates to his object in the creation, and exhibits the profound operations of his will in the means he has used. Did creation ever teach a man that he was made for a nobler end than merely to live, die, and perish ? Those who seek for the wisdom of God in creation alone, generally become *Materialists*. ‘The various beings,’ say they, ‘which exist, are only different modifications of matter ; matter is imperishable ; and the grave is the *ultima Thule* of animated nature.’ Thus they argue ! In this kind of darkness does the solitary contemplation of the creation involve the human mind. The Bible dispels the gloom ; and lets in a ray of light which enables us to penetrate the wisdom of the Deity. How truly philosophical is the Bible in this particular ! It assures us that “another, and a better, world,” awaits us after death. And does not human

reason sanction the revelation which the Bible affords? What *wisdom* would God display in creating myriads of beings, dooming them all to perish after fluttering awhile in an uncertain state of existence? And yet *such* is the *only wisdom* of the Deity which can be gained from Mr. Paine's word of God.

He goes on---“Do we want to contemplate his munificence? we see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth.”

Ah! Mr. Paine: where are all the famines that pervade the earth from time to time? In some regions you find the globe parched with heat, and in others congealed with cold: In one portion of the earth you find the human species enveloped in darkness for six months in the year, in a country, barren and unsusceptible of cultivation, gaining with the utmost difficulty food barely sufficient to preserve their lives: And when in the best of climates, after men have toiled to make the earth produce, the hopes of the harvest are frequently blasted, and the result of much labor blighted in the bud! And yet we are told to contemplate the munificence of God in the abundance with which he fills the earth! Out upon such sophistry. No. The Bible alone is the volume where we can contemplate the munificence of God: It is there where we find weak human nature comforted: It is there where the spirit of the poor is cherished, and the hearts of all cheered and fortified against the calamities of life.

Those evils which appear most terrible to mankind are there disrobed of half their terrors; we are told that the perishable pleasures

and enjoyments of this world are of small account in the eyes of God; that a nobler goal is before us; that to be happy, we have only to be virtuous; and that to enjoy immortality, we have nothing more to do, than to worship God with purity of heart agreeably to the Christian doctrines. Reposing on the sublime idea, the soul of man repines no more at the inequalities of life; but with the bright object in view it disregards all the miseries which destructive climates, famines, or the most tremendous ruin can inflict upon it. Such is the superiority of my word of God, over that of Thomas Paine.

Again, Mr. Paine says---“Do we want to contemplate his mercy? we see it in his not withholding abundance even from the unthankful.”

I must here be allowed to say, if the mercy of God were to be judged of by the incidents afforded by the occurrences of the world, it would turn out to be a blind indifference to its affairs. Does it shew us his mercy, to find vice exalted and virtue depressed? what kind of mercy is that which distributes to villainy the rewards that are only due to honesty? yet the creation, or natural world, affords no other proof of God's mercy. The general course of human events, demonstrates that “abundance” is more frequently poured into the lap of knavery than into that of downright industry: So far, then, creation can afford no adequate idea of the mercy of the Deity. But when we turn to the Bible, it is there that the mercy of the august Divinity shines with peculiar lustre: In that volume the spirit or soul which in this world is sought to be crushed by the strong arm of proud and

pitiless prosperity, is taught to know that this life is but a pilgrimage, and that whoever suffers most here for the sake of truth and righteousness, is the best prepared for happiness beyond the bounds of mortality: This is mercy indeed; it is raising up the desponding soul, and pouring balm into its wounds. And he who from a contemplation of the freaks of fortune, might be disposed to deny God's mercy to his creatures altogether, and accuse the Deity of inattention to the work of his hands, finds in the Bible a comforter and a friend, which points to the way in which God is truly merciful, by offering to the suffering good man a lasting happiness in another world, whilst he denies it to the bad, although he may enjoy the benefits of prosperity here. This is in the true spirit of philosophy; for it would be unworthy of an immortal Creator to reward virtuous actions, which are emanations of the soul, with natural benefits, that are frail and perishable. The enjoyments of sense end in the grave; those of spirit exist forever.

How will Mr. Paine reconcile the application of the idea of mercy to the bestowing of "abundance upon the unthankful?" Is it not rather an encouragement to wickedness? and that which promotes wickedness deserves some other name than mercy. Besides, God is *equitable*; and to say that giving "abundance to the *unthankful*" and withholding it from the *thankful*, is equitable, is to assert a very great absurdity. If a rogue is benefitted and an honest man neglected, so far from that being an act of mercy, it is palpable injustice and cruelty.

Mercy is an attribute of power to be exercised towards the true penitent. Will Mr. Paine point out what part of creation demonstrates that God will manifest mercy to whomsoever repents of wickedness? Does creation, indeed, teach us any thing concerning good or evil? Wickedness or goodness have their origin in the human spirit, or soul: It is there where they must be punished or rewarded by the Deity. Does the creation, for example, show that murder is a crime? Surely not. We find that one animal devours another; and that the human species in some parts of the world murder, and it is said, eat each other with unrelenting barbarity and without remorse. Would they do this if the creation taught them it was a crime? Why does not nature teach the midnight assassin to forego the sacrifice of his victim? Why! Because the creation is not an instructor in those divine precepts which soften and humanize mankind. God is the instructor himself: His omnipresent spirit penetrates and enlightens the soul through the medium of *Reflection*, by Revelations suitable to our nature, which clearly point out to us what is right or what is wrong. It is thus we find that murder is a crime; that it is an offence to cozen or cheat our fellow men. Here the Bible demonstrates its great excellency as the word of God. Its precepts are sound and good; the truths which it inculcates are incontrovertible; and the doctrines laid down by it sublime and consonant to the dictates of moral justice.

The plain truth is, that God's attributes cannot be discerned from his creation, any more than

the virtues of a man can be ascertained from any piece of machinery he may put together. The creation is not the *word* but the *work* of the Deity; and as his work only we can contemplate it. Without those revelations which from time to time God has made to man, the operations of the natural world would have served merely for a stumbling block. The universe is no revelation of the Deity; for a revelation is the making known something which had been hidden: Now it cannot be said that the universe was hidden from man; because the universe, in the general order of things, must have existed before man existed; and is palpable to his senses from the moment of his birth. Its appearance remains the same during his life; and with all his research and cunning he can neither ascertain from it alone the object of God in creating it, nor discover the wisdom of his providence in the management of it.

Mr. Paine quotes at large from the writings of doctor Conyers Middleton, to prove that "the visible works of creation are a revelation of God." I very much doubt whether this doctor or Thomas Paine have distinct and fixed ideas of what the meaning of the terms *revelation* and *creation* are, when they speak in that manner. Man is a part of the creation; but he is of that part of it which was created last; for I take it as granted, that man could not have existed before there was a world for him to exist in. This being the case, I hold it an absurdity to say that God revealed himself to man in the creation, because if there were any revelation in the case it was made by the creation of man for how can

that be said to have been revealed which wanted no revelation to make it known?

Besides, if the creation be really a revelation of God to man, why has a great portion of men remained in such ignorance of his divine attributes? One objection that Mr. Paine urges against the truth of the Christian system is, that it is circumscribed and therefore not adequate to the ends for which it is said to have been established: Now there is no such objection against Thomas Paine's word of God, the creation. Every human being can read his book; but a great portion of the people of the globe have still no just idea of a God. Why is this? If the creation be a revelation to one man, it must be a revelation to every man; for it is visible to all. Yet it works neither conversion nor the performance of good works. Left to the contemplation of the creation alone, man still remains a savage, and his mind a chaos of darkling thoughts.

Man consists of two parts, of body and of soul. His body is of the natural, his soul of the spiritual world. It is by his spirit that the body of man is governed. What more rational way of revelation then, can we conceive, than that God, who must be spiritual too, reveals himself to man by enlightening his soul with reflections which designate to him the true path to eternal felicity? Why God has not caused the Christian doctrines to prevail universally, is one of those inscrutable mysteries which human nature is not permitted to know. That, however, forms no argument against its excellence; Virtue is acknowledged to be amiable and acceptable in the eyes of Heaven; why, then, is it not univer-

sal? Why is vice suffered to predominate? The cases are the same. The organization of the spiritual world is hidden from us: And, indeed, in this stage of existence it is impossible that we should ever know that sublime and awful secret, because whosoever can understand the whole design and plans of Providence must be equal in intelligence to the Deity; and that cannot be the case in any possible point of view here.

In order to show the absurdity of Mr. Paine's doctrine that the creation is a revelation of God, I have been induced to pourtray the world in a point of view which may lead to the belief that I wish to call the wisdom of God in question. Nothing, however, is farther from my thoughts. I have merely done it to prove that if the creation alone is to be our guide with respect to the acquirement of a true knowledge of the Deity, it would rather go to teach us that he is a God indifferent to the welfare of his creatures, and unjust in the distribution of favors. I well can comprehend how the operations of a superior being may be wise and proper, and yet not appear so in the eyes of an inferior one. We see this every day in common life. The fool condemns the projects of the wise man in the first instance, because he does not understand them. Time, however, opens his eyes, and then the wise man is applauded and the fool confounded. So I can think it would be with men had they a proper view of the whole intentions of the Deity; they would no longer cavil, but glorify him.

And moreover, we have not in this world any standard whereby we can measure the munificence, the wisdom, or the mercy of God.— These attributes are all relative. The justice of man is certainly not the justice of God.---- How preposterous, therefore, to judge of the one by the other. Men may have a correct idea of justice with regard to each other agreeably to social order ; but of God's justice, not being able to comprehend the details of his plan of creation, we can form no proper estimate. There can be no doubt but that the Deity is just, and good, and wise ; but the way in which he exercises those qualities of his nature, baffles all our researches ; and particularly so if we confine ourselves to the contemplation of creation. The Bible is the only source from whence we derive any thing like a reasonable conception of God's attributes, and the way in which he exercises them. We learn from that book, that the natural world is only a means adopted for the completion of a great spiritual work ; and that the operations of the former are no further of importance than as they tend to the perfection of the latter.

In his "*Dialogues concerning NATURAL Religion*," Hume makes one of his disputants speak in the following manner, which strictly coincides with what I have advanced :

" As all perfection is entirely *relative*, we ought never to imagine that we comprehend [from *Natural Religion*] the attributes of his (God's) Divine Being, or to suppose that his perfections have any analogy or likeness to the perfection of a human creature.— Wisdom, Thought, Design, Knowledge ; these we justly ascribe to him ; because these words are honorable among men, and we have no other language or other conceptions by which we can ex-

press our adoration of him. But let us beware, lest we think, that our ideas any wise correspond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any resemblance to these qualities among men. He is infinitely superior to our limited view and comprehension ; and is more the object of worship in the temple than of disputation in the schools." *Dialogues, &c. Part 2.*

As I am in the way of explanation, I will speak in this place to another point : I have said that a revelation to one man is not a revelation to another man. Mr.P. in his former writings makes great use of the proposition : But it ought to be recollected, that if a revelation to one man is not a revelation to another man, yet what is revealed to one man may prove beneficial to another. The same objection may be raised against every discovery that is made in the arts or sciences. A discovery by one man is not a discovery by another man ; yet what is discovered by one person becomes knowledge to another : and so it is with revelation : If a thing is revealed to one man, and that man communicates it to the world at large, it answers the same end as if it had been revealed to every man separately by the Deity. Many of Mr. Paine's propositions are of this cast. When minutely examined, they turn out to be mere sophisms, which appear true to the superficial mind, but cannot withstand the examination of a serious enquirer.

If mankind were left to creation alone for their knowledge of God, millions would die without any correct idea of the Divine Being. It requires a long life, leisure, study and reflection, to form from creation alone, even a faint notion of his excellence. The Bible cuts short the road at once ; and after all Mr. Paine's vaporing, I have little doubt but what his own

ideas of God were originally derived from the Bible. It leads a man directly to the true knowledge of God, and is within the reach of every person that endeavors to procure it.

Voltaire was right when he said that mere Deism would not do for the multitude. Abstract Deism is only calculated for theological SPECULATORS, who lead *lazy lives*, and have *pliable consciences*.

It is singular enough, that all the objections levelled at the Christian system, are made against priests and prophets and not against Jesus Christ or his particular doctrines. Now if priests have been wicked and prophets have erred, what has that to do with the doctrines of Jesus Christ? It may be a good cause of objection against the offending priests and prophets, but certainly none against Jesus Christ and the religion he promulgated. But it is a convenient mode of cavilling, and Thomas Paine has indulged in it pretty largely.

You might as well say that mercury and opium are detestable, because they are sometimes improperly used by ignorant pretenders to a knowledge of medicine, as that the Christian religion is false because some of those who profess it are vicious. The medicines may be good, but the doctor a quack, and the religion excellent, yet the professor of it a knave. If you hate the doctor do not for that reason decry physic; and if Thomas Paine dislikes priests, that is no substantial reason for reviling the religion of Jesus Christ.

I now proceed to show that the Christian doctrines inculcate precepts which are calculat-

ed to make men good here, and to render them happy hereafter, both in religion and morals.

RELIGION is that science which teaches men their duties towards God. I will enter into a concise exposition of the rules which Jesus Christ laid down on this head. In his sermon on the Mount, he says :

“ When thou prayest, enter into thy closet ; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which is in secret. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions. After this manner pray ye : Our father which art in Heaven ; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread : And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation ; but deliver us from evil : For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.”

St. Matt. ch. 6, v. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

I think it will puzzle all the mere abstract deists in creation, to devise a method of praying and a form of prayer more consonant to reason and the ideas which are entertained of the Deity than the one laid down by Jesus Christ. To go into your closet, to shut the door, having no mortal witness to your prayers, is precisely that way in which we may suppose the soul of man can hold the most intimate communion with God. As religion is a business between man and his Maker, the duties of it require no earthly witness. Shut up in a closet, divided entirely from the world, with a simple but impressive form of prayer, the heart is mellowed to goodness, the soul is elevated, and man is rendered a being more acceptable to his creator, more correct in his conduct, and more amiable in the eyes of his fellow-men.

To the pious exercise of charity he invites men, but at the same time he warns them to beware of hypocrisy: He says:

“Take heed that ye do not give your alms before men, to be seen of them; therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee.” *Matt. ch. 6, v. 1, 2.*

Is not such the true conduct, which reason will sanction, to be observed in giving alms? To give them in ostentation, and before the eyes of men, would be to do away all the virtue of charity; for charity, to be really such, must issue from a feeling heart and a heavenly love towards our fellow creatures: Hence Christ says:

“When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” *Matt. ch. 6, v. 3.*

In all cases Jesus Christ exhorts to a pure and serious worship of the Deity, devoid of hypocrisy, with encouragement for those who are sincere in their adorations. And what is very remarkable, in all his discourses for the benefit of mankind, he does not exalt himself, but ordains all prayer, thanksgiving, and praise, to be directed to God: He represents himself as the agent, as the medium which the Deity has selected, through which to enlighten his creatures.

MORALS, is that science which teaches men their duties towards each other. In this point of view how admirably do the doctrines of Jesus Christ coincide with the dictates of reason:

“All things (he says) whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.” *Matt. ch. 7, v. 12.*

This is a maxim which, if adhered to, would insure honesty, good will, and a full and continual exercise of all the virtues of which human nature is capable, by one man towards another.

How eloquently too, does he turn our thoughts upon ourselves, to prevent our cavilling at the foibles or weaknesses of others ! He says :

“ Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye ? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye : and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye ? Thou hypocrite ! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye ; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”

Matt. ch. 7, v. 3, 4, 5.

He condemns divorces, and strengthens the marriage contract. He observes :

“ I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery : And whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery.” *Matt. ch. 5, v. 32.*

And how eloquently does he denounce the common but indecent practice of swearing :

“ I say unto you, swear not at all ; neither by heaven ; for it is God’s throne : Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool : Neither shalt thou swear by thy head ; because thou canst not make one hair white nor black : But let your communication be yea, yea ; nay, nay ; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil.” *Matt. ch. 5, v. 34, 35, 36, 37.*

But why should I multiply quotations ?--- Whenever Jesus Christ speaks it is for the benefit of true Religion and the advantage of sound Morals. All the duties which men owe to each other ; and all the obligations by which they are bound to their Creator, are inculcated and

enforced with a simplicity of expression and purity of manner which must strike home to the heart.

Who is there but will perceive after due reflection, a fantastical singularity in Mr. Paine's objections to the Christian system, when he sets Deism up in opposition to it? What is the creed of a Deist? He believes in God. What is the creed of a Christian? He believes in God too! The great point of difference seems to be this: The Deist wishes to throw aside the Bible, to look into *matter* for his God: The Christian hugs the Bible to his heart, he is animated by its doctrines and its precepts, he is cheered by the example, the sufferings, the promises of a Saviour; he elevates his soul above the natural world; he regards with an equal eye the pleasures and calamities* of this life, and soaring by reflection beyond the bounds of the universe, contemplates his God altogether in a *spiritual* point of view, pure, majestic, and inviting the virtuous to immortality! What are the cold and comfortless conjectures of a Deist, to the exhilarating, the sparkling coruscations of that holy

* Hume, in his *Dialogues on Natural Religion*, has most impressively depicted the scenes which this world affords to the eye of a philosopher. Who will pretend to say that such a representation as the following, which all will acknowledge to be true, can alone afford the human mind any evidence of the wisdom, munificence, or mercy of the Deity? Hume says: "Were a stranger to drop, on a sudden, into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, an hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strowed with carcasses, a fleet foundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine, or pestilence. To turn the gay side of life to him, and give him a notion of its pleasures; whither should I conduct him? to a ball, to an opera, to court? He might justly think that I was only showing him a diversity of distress and sorrow."

Dialogues, Part 10.

and exalted flame which warms, expands, and excites to a sublime glow, the bosom of a Christian ; which conveys an extatic pleasure to every vein about his heart, and yields even in the hour of death a calmness to resignation which the frigid calculations of skeptic speculators in theology never gave !

But it seems, to please Mr. Paine, Jesus Christ and the Bible must be thrown by, and we must be left to grope our way in the dark, by the glimmering, delusive lights, which creation alone affords. What a noble proposition for *Common Sense* ! The Bible which teaches the true knowledge of God is to be laid aside for something else, which, to admit all that is contended for, can teach no more : And Thomas Paine, in the joy of his heart exclaims, “ *He that believes in the story of Christ is an Infidel to God.*”..... May I not throw in the teeth of such a man his own taunt ? May I not address him, as he did the late venerable and pious Samuel Adams, with “ *What, my friend, do you call BELIEVING IN GOD, INFIDELITY !*” Jesus Christ taught the belief of God ; so did the Apostles ; yet whoever believes in what they taught, is an *Infidel* ! Surely such ridiculous incongruity is disgraceful to a man who publicly boasts of “a large share of the divine gift of reason.” Before the time of Christ the world was over-run with a fabulous and absurd theology. A few solitary sages at distant periods of time may have had through the mists of error which shrouded the human mind, a faint glimpse of the attributes of the Deity ; but it was reserved for a being more than mortal to divulge to the world at large

those great doctrines which point out the relations between time and eternity, and lead human reason to right conclusions by the revelations of God. And shall we not do honor and reverence to Jesus Christ, as a Being allied to the Almighty, and who developed to us the principles of salvation and the path to everlasting life? To men like ourselves, but who have achieved great actions on earth, wise men have raised statues and monuments, and their names, embodied in history, have been embalmed and consecrated in the affections of many generations; but Thomas Paine would refuse to Jesus Christ even the show of respect, of regard, of veneration! To Jesus Christ, who pioneered the way for us through brambles, and brakes, and multiplied obstructions, to eternal happiness!

Thomas Paine does well to doubt even the *existence* of Christ: When once a man is in the way of doubting, he varies to every point of the compass. It is of little consequence, after the Christian precepts are overthrown, what becomes of the *person* of Christ. The human mind is so singularly constituted, that once we are loosened from the point where we have been safely moored, and put to sea without compass and quadrant, all our stock of reason will be insufficient to carry us safe into port again; we run on reefs and breakers, and the adventure generally ends with a complete shipwreck of our morality; which is mostly the case with those who take leave of the lights that the Bible affords. Thomas Paine runs full tilt at every thing which opposes *his* reason, and is so eager in the pursuit that he fairly overthrows reason itself.

But setting aside every consideration with respect to the divinity of Christ, and admitting what Mr. Paine says in its utmost latitude, the only point that he establishes is this: *It is better to believe in God through creation than through Jesus Christ.* It is therefore, after all, on the part of Mr. Paine nothing more than a controversy concerning the *mode* of belief: And surely that man must be a tyrant in his heart who can denounce his fellow-mortals as knaves and fools, because they believe a little more or a little less than himself, or deviate from the standard which he sets up.

“For *modes* of Faith let graceless zealots fight ;
 “His can’t be wrong, whose life is in the right.”

For my own part I should be as fearful of a deistical persecutor as of a Christian one ; because it is the pride of human nature that works in both, and sets them on to oppose *religious toleration*. However mere Deists may rail, and self-sufficient reason arraign the Bible, turning Mr. Paine’s phrase against himself I will say, “HE THAT BELIEVES IN THE STORY OF CHRIST” MUST BELIEVE IN GOD.

Mr. Paine closes his work with an Appendix, which includes his “*Private Thoughts of a Future State*,” and “*Contradictory Doctrines in the New Testament, between Matthew and Mark.*”

With respect to the first, he says, “My own opinion is, that those whose lives have been spent in doing good, and endeavoring to make their fellow mortals happy, for this is the only way in which we can serve God, *will be happy hereafter* ; and that the *very wicked* will meet with *some* punishment. But those who are neither good nor bad, or are too insignificant for notice, will be dropt entirely.” And to support this opinion, he attacks St. Matthew’s account of the day of judgment, where we are told that the righteous will be saved and the unrighteous punished ; in behalf of which attack he reasons as follows : “Now the case is, the world cannot be thus divided (into righteous and unrighteous.) The moral world, like the physical world, is composed of numerous degrees of character, running imperceptibly one into the other, in such a manner that no fixed point of division can be found in either.” It appears plain to me that this reasoning throughout is fallacious. In all social institutions the laws define what is crime ; and the line of distinction is plain enough. Why should we doubt that God

has fixed rules too, with regard to wickedness? "One part of the world may not be all good alike, nor the other all bad alike:" But if every man be judged by the opportunity which he has had of doing good or evil and by the grade of his intellect, the discrimination is easily made: And, as a skilful chemist can analyse substances, and tell what part of them is precious and what part is base, so the Deity, knowing at once all the good and evil actions of a man's life, is enabled instantly to determine to which class he shall belong--the righteous or the unrighteous.

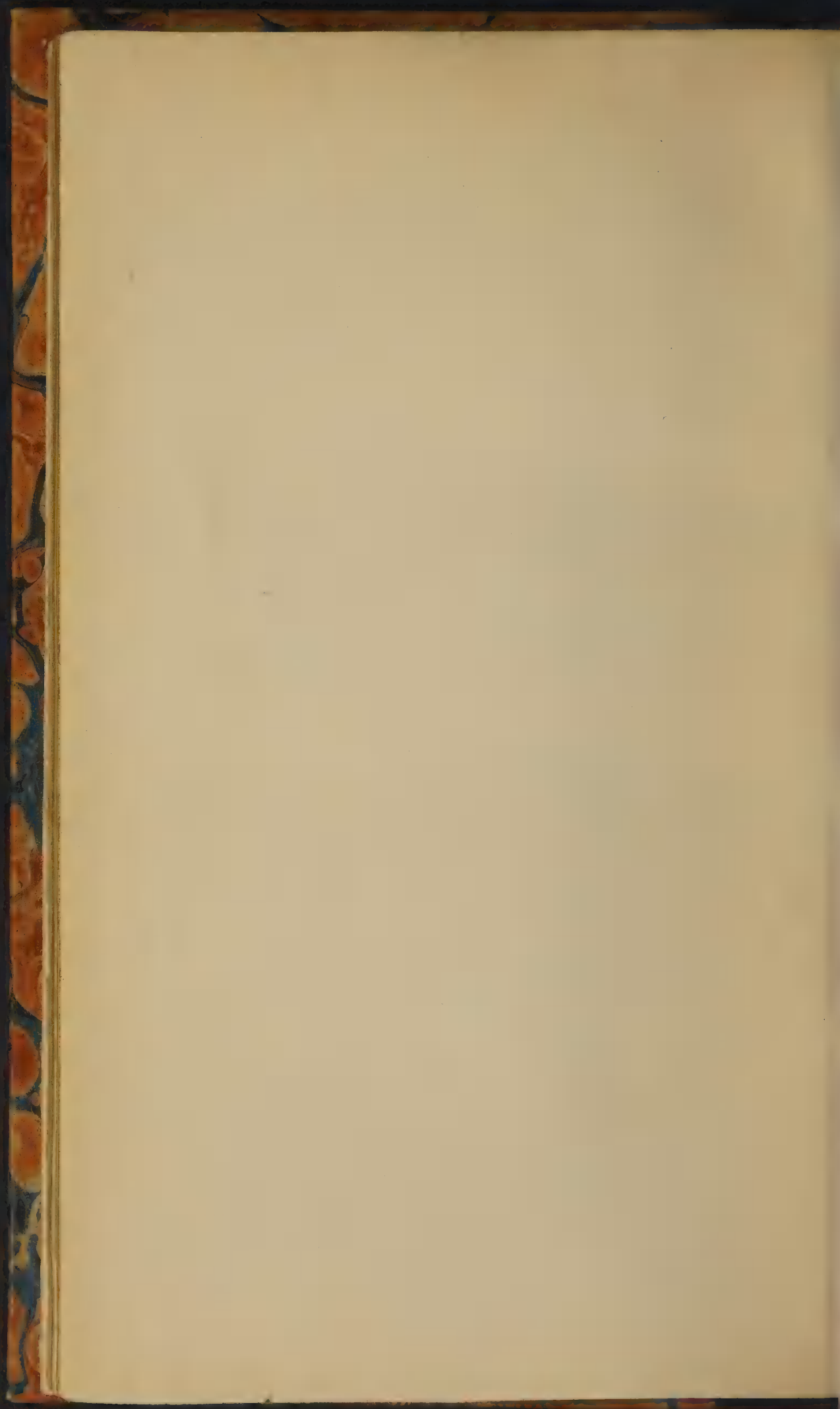
That "those whose lives have been spent in doing good, will be happy hereafter," and "the *very wicked* will meet with" MORE than "some punishment," can require no argument to demonstrate: But to aver that there is a portion of beings, belonging to the same class with those who are to be happy or to be punished, "too insignificant for notice," who "will be dropt entirely," and who are so contemptible "both in character and conduct as not to be worth the trouble of damning or saving, or of raising from the dead," is a horrid blasphemy against the Almighty. Is God equitable? Then how can he be cruelly indifferent to any portion of human beings. Is he just? Then how can he suffer the existence of a human soul to perish in the grave. Is he merciful?—Then why will he not preserve those who are not "*very wicked*," and whose greatest fault is that they are "*insignificant*?" Has not such doctrine "a direct tendency to demoralize mankind?" For who is there that would not rush into the depths of wickedness in order to be preserved even for "some punishment," in preference to being annihilated after death? Let such sentiments once prevail at large in the world, and those very beings who are represented now so very insignificant as "not to be worth the trouble of damning or saving," would turn cut-throats at once for the benefit of a resurrection.

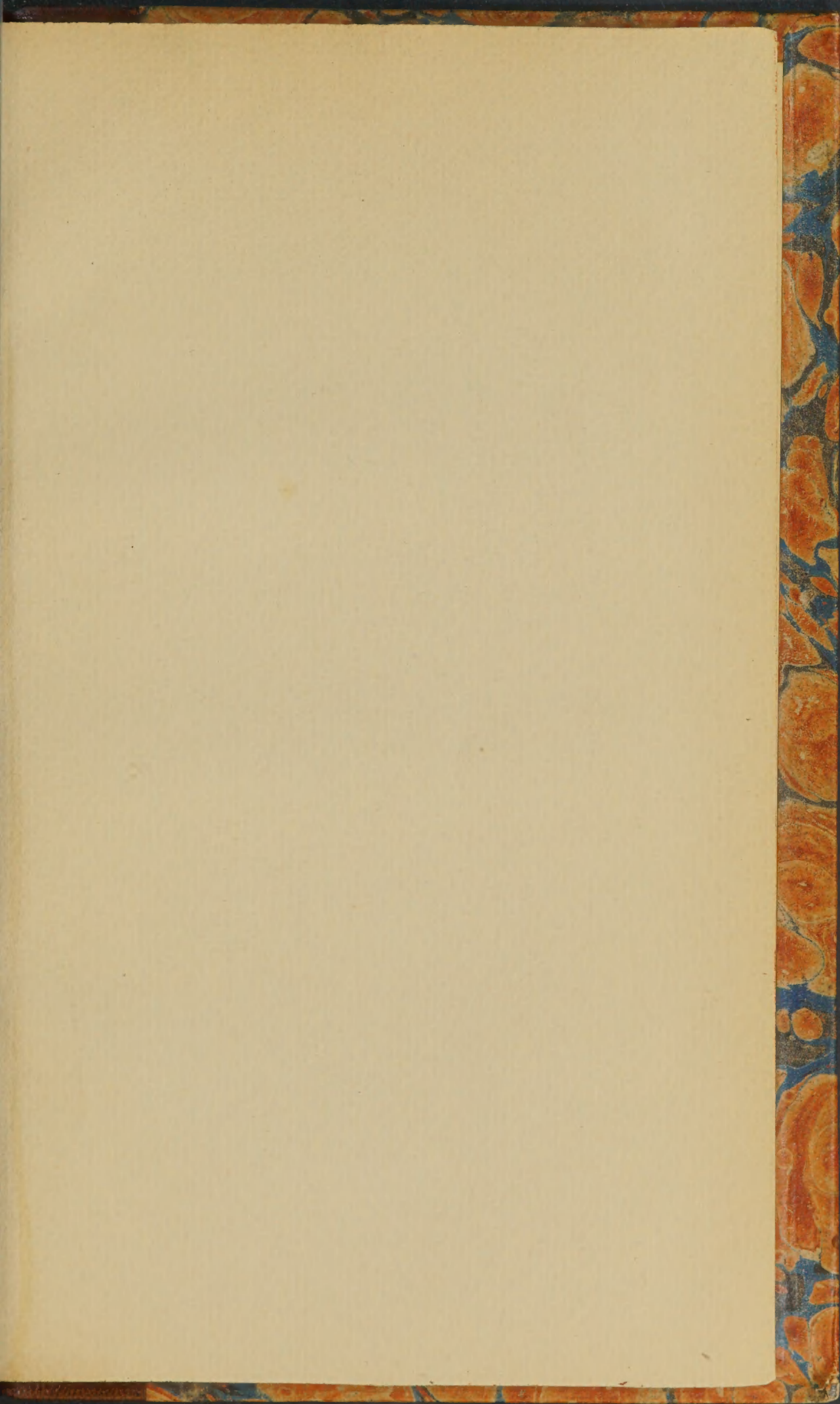
Mr. Paine, however, has saved *himself* from the necessity of committing great crimes, by making sure of a good birth in Heaven: He has such a "large share of reason," that he must of course be worth "raising from the dead." Whether his life has "been spent in doing good to his fellow-mortals," whereby he may escape "some punishment" hereafter, is another question.

In regard to the "Contradictory Doctrines in the New Testament, between Matthew and Mark," so far from being *contradictory*, they are in perfect concert. St. Mark says, "*He that believeth shall be saved*," &c. St. Matthew represents *good works* as leading to salvation. Now as to the *believing* part, what does that refer to? Why, to *belief in the Christian Religion*: And what does the Christian Religion teach? *Good works*. A true believer in the Christian doctrines always does good works; and thus the one has reference to the other, and the two apostles perfectly agree.

I have now gone through Mr. Paine's "Examination," his "Dream," and his "Private Thoughts:" I have treated him with as little ceremony as he has treated the Bible. I respect him for his early political writings, and it was to the reward which he procured for his services during our revolutionary war that I alluded when I said he had made money by his preaching: Had any priest of these times received such a gift, I have no doubt but he would have been reproached for it by Mr. Paine. For my part, I rejoice that my country had the magnanimity so to reward him. Yet in his political writings he is much of a zealot. He explains a principle well: His language is clear and forcible: But there is a vanity about him that blinds his reason; and a fervor of imagination which frequently misleads his judgment. Thomas Paine would have made an excellent poet; but neither in politics or religion is he a prophet. The kingdoms of Europe have outlived his predictions; and the Bible will survive all the attacks of his pen.







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